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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000163

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SUBJECT: BUYING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

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Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY. House of Representatives member Saudatu A. Sani, strictly protect, told Poloffs on January 23 that she bought her PDP nomination to return to the House for approximately 1 million Naira (USD 7,812). Sani maintained that the party primaries are the most corrupt segment of the elections process. She indicated that she and several other candidates plan to speak out about the process once they are reelected. According to Sani, the current system of nominating candidates favors male candidates as they have access to more money. Sani also expressed exasperation at the level of corruption and also relayed to Poloffs a story of microcredit loans allocated by the Federal Government to the Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank, for which she has been unable to track funds, trace payments or find grant recipients. END SUMMARY.

BUYING THE PDP NOMINATION

12. (S) Saudati Sani (strictly protect), PDP member of the House of Representatives and Chair of Committee on Women's Affairs and Youth, told Poloffs on January 23 that she paid state party delegates in excess of USD 7,800 to win the party nomination for reelection. According to Sani, she paid 20,000 Naira (USD 156) to each of the 50 state party delegates in order to secure the nomination. Sani said her opponent had made a last-minute attempt to pay each of the delegates 50,000 Naira (USD 390), but that she had intervened with the bank where her opponent had taken out a loan, delaying the loan and thereby scuttling the attempt. According to Sani, she and several other House members seeking reelection plan to speak out about the corruption of the system -- immediately following their reelection, of course.

13. (C) Sani outlined the other expenses involved in her nomination as well. She told Poloffs she paid 5,000 Naira (approximately USD 40) per day for each of ten vans she used on the campaign, as well as the expenses for her campaign team members. The large sums of money needed to secure the nomination, she contended, made it almost impossible for women to succeed as they often do not have the financial resources of their male colleagues. Even the reduced cost of the PDP declaration form, she contended, in the end works against women as it undermines the perceived strength of

female candidates in the eyes of men in the party. Sani claimed the PDP rule allowing women a "handicap" in the nomination process was simply for show and would never be applied in practice. (NOTE: PDP headquarters confirmed that according to the PDP primary rules a candidate must receive 50 percent of the vote to gain the nomination. If, however, a male candidate wins the most votes, but less than 50 percent, and a female candidate wins the second most votes, the nomination will be given to the female candidate without a runoff. Likewise, if a female candidate wins the most votes, but less than 50 percent, the nomination will be given to her without a runoff. No female candidates won nomination by this rule.)

14. (C) COMMENT. It is interesting to note that the common practice is for each of the candidates to pay every delegate and compete in a "bidding war" for the vote, rather than to focus money on paying just the number of delegates needed to secure the majority. The bidding war nature of the competition also requires delegates to disclose to the candidates the amounts paid by their opponents. In other words, the corruption is blatant, with no attempt to hide the activity.

15. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED. It should also be noted that this level of corruption is taking place within a single political party, where the candidates would normally be presumed to share like ideologies and an allegiance to the party. Likewise, the party delegates would normally be presumed to vote with the best interest of the party and the potential for winning the election in mind. Aside from the immediate payoff of 20,000 Naira, payment for a vote would only be worthwhile if you thought the candidate would win in the end (as patronage would follow the party lines). This may be yet another signal that PDP members are highly confident of their ability to win the elections at all levels. END COMMENT.

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MICROCREDIT LOAN GRANT UNTRACEABLE

16. (S) In describing the absurdity of current levels of corruption, Sani cited the example of 100 million Naira (USD 781,250) which was given by the Federal Government to the Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (ACRDB) for microcredits to women's enterprises. According to Sani, the terms of the grant stated that the money should be loaned to women in twelve selected states and the governments of the selected states should also pay into the grant fund (increasing the fund to well over 100 million Naira). Sani has been attempting to follow-up on the fund to track the success of the microcredits. She was appalled, however, when no one (including the ACRDB, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, or the State offices of women's affairs) could tell her what had happened to the money, or even which states had been selected to receive the funds. With no record of which states were selected, Sani said the funds became almost impossible to track. Sani told Poloffs initiating an investigation into the use of these funds is one of her top priorities upon reelection.

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